

Accused Drug Smuggler Arrested at St. Croix Airport After Allegedly Disabling Court-Ordered Ankle Monitor

Federal defendant Shaheel Singh, charged with smuggling over 10 kilograms of marijuana from California, was detained at Henry E. Rohlsen Airport after authorities discovered his tracking device had been rendered inoperative.

Crime / **Published On October 21, 2025 07:24 AM /**

Staff Consortium **October 21, 2025**

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The Henry E. Rohlsen Airport on St. Croix. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM.

ST. CROIX — A man accused of smuggling over 10 kilograms of marijuana into the Virgin Islands had his release conditions revoked after he was found trying to leave the territory with a non-functional ankle monitor.

Shaheel Singh was arrested in September after Customs and Border Protection officials found the marijuana wrapped in vacuum-sealed packages in his luggage. The bags had been checked-in from the San Francisco International Airport in California and tagged all the way through to St. Croix via Miami.

He was charged with possession with intent to distribute a controlled substance, and possession, manufacture or distribution on board an aircraft.

On September 22, Singh appeared before U.S. Magistrate Emile Henderson III, who ordered that he post an unsecured appearance bond of \$50,000, and allowed him to return to California once he accepted GPS location monitoring from the probation office.

The next day, the Probation and Pretrial Services Office alerted the court that Singh had apparently removed the battery from his ankle monitor while being transported and left it behind. The device was therefore non-functioning, and authorities could not determine the suspect's whereabouts. The last GPS co-ordinates recorded were outside the Bureau of Corrections. Singh appeared to have absconded, and a warrant was issued for his arrest.

He was found later that day at the Henry E. Rohlsen Airport and arrested as he was preparing to board a flight.

Back before the court, Singh told Judge Henderson that he did not know the battery had been disconnected from the monitoring device. When he was released from John Bell Correctional Center, he called a relative for a ride to a hotel. He claimed to have been unaware of how to operate his ankle monitor, and found himself unable to plug in the charger for the device, which was beeping. He could not explain why he did not contact his assigned probation officer for assistance. Singh told the court that he did not call his attorney because he had lost the card with the number. He also claimed that the hotel did not have telephones in the room, and also that there was an electricity outage that evening which prevented him from making calls or charging the ankle monitor.

The court was skeptical of his testimony, and Singh's bond and pretrial release was revoked.

On October 3, Judge Henderson held a hearing to consider new conditions of release for Singh, and decide to allow him his freedom ahead of trial with a new unsecured \$50,000 bond, and a third-party custodian identified. He must remain in California unless traveling to St. Croix for court appearances, and Singh will once again be required to submit to location monitoring. He must also abide by a 7:30 p.m. to 7:30 a.m. daily curfew.